

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9366

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, IN, PFOR

SUBJ: MRS. GANDHI ADDRESSES HUGE "SOLIDARITY" RALLY

SUMMARY: ADDRESSING A HALF-MILLION STRONG SOLIDARITY RALLY IN DELHI ON JUNE 20, MRS. GANDHI DEVOTED MOST OF HER REMARKS TOWARDS ATTACKING THE OPPOSITION FOR DIVIDING THE COUNTRY DURING A TIME OF TRIAL. SHE ALSO CAUTIONED THE NATION AGAINST A WELL-ORGANIZED CONSPIRACY OF "BIG FORCES" OUT TO REMOVE HER FROM POWER. AT ONE POINT IN HER SPEECH, SHE STATED THAT WHEN SHE SPOKE OF "EXTERNAL DANGER" SOME TIME AGO ONE COUNTRY (UNNAMED) THOUGHT THAT SHE HAD IT IN MIND, BUT THIS WAS NOT SO. END SUMMARY.

1. THE CONGRESS PARTY MOBILIZED OVER A HALF-MILLION PEOPLE FOR ITS JUNE 20 DELHI "SOLIDARITY RALLY" BEHIND MRS. GANDHI ADDRESSING THE CROWD, MRS. GANDHI DESCRIBED IT AS A "VAST SEA OF HUMANITY" CALLED TOGETHER

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NOT IN CONNECTION WITH THE ALLAHABAD HIGH COURT VERDICT

BUT ONLY TO EMPHASIZE THE STABILITY AND SOLIDARITY OF THE COUNTRY. DURING HER ONE HOUR SPEECH, REPEATEDLY INTERRUPTED BY SPIRITED CHEERS FROM HER AUDIENCE, THE PRIME MINISTER MAINLY CONCENTRATED ON ATTACKING THE OPPOSITION FOR DEMANDING HER REMOVAL AND DIVIDING THE POPULACE DURING A DIFFICULT PERIOD OF TRIAL. SHE HELD THAT INDIA HAD MADE TREMENDOUS PROGRESS OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS AND ITS INTERNATIONAL PRESTIGE WAS HIGH. WHILE HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE HAD DIED OF STARVATION IN SOME AFRICAN COUNTRIES, "WE HAD SEEN TO IT THAT NOT A SINGLE PERSON DIED FROM WANT OF FOOD." MRS. GANDHI RECALLED THAT SHE HAD BEEN WORKING FOR THE COUNTRY SINCE HER CHILDHOOD DAYS IN THE FAMILY TRADITION, AND IT DID NOT MATTER WHETHER SHE REMAINED PRIME MINISTER OR WAS "EVEN FINISHED".

2. MRS GANDHI REBUTTED THE CHARGE THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS SUPPRESSING DISSENT, BUT CLAIMED THAT FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN INDIA HAD BEEN GROSSLY ABUSED NOT ONLY TO RUN HER DOWN AS AN INDIVIDUAL BUT ALSO TO DENIGRATE THE "HIGHEST EXECUTIVE OFFICE IN THE COUNTRY.

3. DURING THE COURSE OF HER SPEECH, MRS. GANDHI MADE HER CUSTOMARY AMBIVALENT REFERENCES TO "EXTERNAL DANGER." SHE ALSO CAUTIONED THE NATION AGAINST A WELL ORGANIZED AND CALCULATED CONSPIRACY OF "BIG FORCES" THAT WAS AT WORK TO SEE HER REMOVED, AND ADDED THAT THESE FORCES WOULD EVEN GO TO THE EXTENT OF MAKING ATTEMPTS ON HER LIFE. SHE CLAIMED THAT INDIA HAD NO OTHER CHOICE BUT TO STRIVE FOR SELF-SUFFICIENCY. IN THIS CONNECTION, SHE STATED THAT FOREIGN ASSISTANCE COULD BE TERMINATED AT ANY TIME BY THE DONOR AND POINTED OUT THAT DURING THE BANGLADESH CRISIS "THEY" STOPPED ALL AID, INCLUDING THAT WHICH HAD NO BEARING AT ALL ON WAR EFFORTS. SHE ALSO ASKED HER AUDIENCE TO REMEMBER THAT WHENEVER THERE WAS A CHANGE IN THE WORLD BALANCE OF POWER, ONE COULD NOT SAY WHICH COUNTRY MIGHT ATTACK OR EXERT PRESSURE ON INDIA.

4. AT ONE POINT IN HER SPEECH, MRS. GANDHI STATED THAT WHEN SHE SPOKE OF "EXTERNAL DANGER" SOME TIME AGO ONE COUNTRY THOUGHT THAT SHE HAD IT IN MIND BUT THIS WAS NOT SO.

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5. COMMENT: ESTIMATES OF THE CROWD VARIED FROM 500,000 (OURS) TO 1.5 MILLION (CONGRESS) WITH THE POLICE FIGURE AT 800,000-1 MILLION. IT WAS A BIG AFFAIR, INVOLVING HUNDREDS OF BUSLOADS FROM NEIGHBORING STATES, INDUSTRIAL AREAS, AND FROM DELHI ITSELF. MRS. GANDHI'S COMMENT DESCRIBED IN PARA 4 ABOVE WAS HEARD BY AN EMBASSY FSL AT THE RALLY BUT WE HAVE NOT FOUND IT REPORTED IN A WIRESERVICE REPORT THUS FAR.
SCHNEIDER

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